



California State Parks

Quick Facts



Natural Resources of California State Parks

The California State Park System supports the most diverse assemblage of natural resource values of any land management agency in California. These values include underwater areas, beaches, dunes, marshes, lakes, streams, rivers, deserts, forests, meadows, and grasslands. Of the 1,556,425 acres in the State Park System, 93% are in protected habitats.

Natural Resource Facts

- **State Park System Diversity.** The State Park System has major units within all of the state's ecoregions and geomorphic provinces. The State Park System is the only land management system in California with large reserves in all 10 ecological regions.
- **Ecological Diversity.** The State Park System is the most ecologically diverse system in California; of all California's 202 major vegetation types (alliance level), 65% exist within the SPS, e.g. sycamore alluvial woodlands, blue oak savanna, and riversidean sage scrub.
- **Habitat Preservation.** Most of the State Park System is managed for habitat preservation. The State Park System has 278 units and nearly 1.5 million acres. 78% of the acreage is classified State Park (84 units) or State Reserve (17 units) where habitat preservation is the highest objective. Currently we have 278 units, which span about 1,556,425 acres of California. For the most part, these are large parks, averaging 4,048 acres. Of all State Park System acreage, 94% remain in native habitat while 6% is in other categories.
- **Rare Habitat Types.** The State Park System protects examples of almost 50% (46 types of 94) of rare habitat types in California. Examples include coastal prairie, valley oak woodland, and Mendocino pygmy cypress forest.
- **Watchable Wildlife.** The State Park System manages 28% of California's Watchable Wildlife locations currently the database lists 69 sites. Refer to <http://www.cawatchablewildlife.org>
- **Park Research.** On the average 125 natural resource research projects, primarily related to wildlife habitat, are in progress each year in the State Park System. The University of California conducts 43% of these projects while another 47% is conducted by the California State University System.
- **International Recognition.** Seventeen State Park System units have national or international recognition such as World Heritage Site, National Natural Landmark or Biosphere Reserve.
- **Marine Parks.** In 2006 the State Park System had 22 marine parks and reserves (33,755 acres), or nearly 28% of the total 95 marine areas managed by the state of California.
- **Coastal Dunes.** Of all of California's habitat types, coastal dunes are the most impacted. There are an estimated 28,523 acres of remaining coastal sand dunes in this state, and 9,614 acres (33.7%) are in the State Park System.
- **Wilderness.** There are 549,500 acres of designated State Wilderness within the State Park System, making up 99.7% of the entire California Wilderness System.

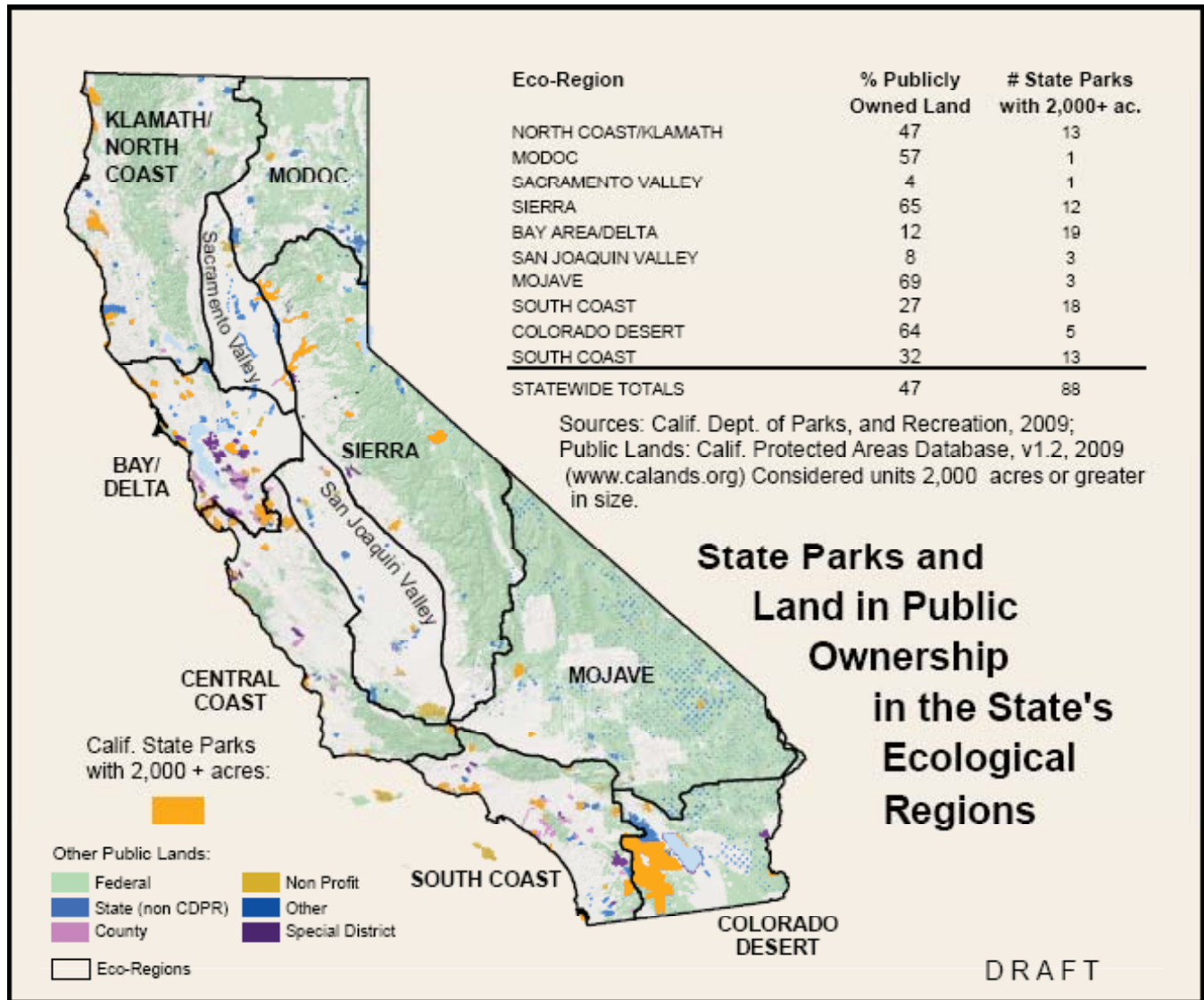


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- Coastal Wetlands. The State Park System has 12 of the 41 most significant Southern California Wetlands.
- Ancient Redwood Forests. California State Parks manages 49,200 acres of old growth coast redwood forest, or 58% of what remains anywhere. Rockefeller Forest, in Humboldt Redwoods State Park, is the largest remaining contiguous old-growth coast

redwood forest in the world (20,000 acres).

- Listed Species. The State Park System has more rare, threatened and endangered species (162), than any other system in California with the exception of the National Forests. However, the National Forests within California are 14 times larger in area than the State Park System. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of all state and federal listed species



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are found in the SPS.

- **Invasive Non-Native Plants.** The ten most invasive non-native plant species requiring eradication in order of most to least effort in the State Park System are, European beach grass (*Ammophila arenaria*), arundo or giant reed (*Arundo donax*), ice plant (*Carpobrotus* sp.), yellow star thistle (*Centavrea solstitialis*), pampas grass, or jubata grass (*Cordaderia jubata*), Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), Cape ivy or German ivy (*Delairea odorata*), eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus* spp.), French broom (*Genista monspessulana*), tamarisk or salt cedar (*Tamarix* spp.). Currently 63 parks are being monitored long term for 26 of the non-native species.
- **Ecoregions.** California State Parks has identified 55 parks that are most representative of California's 10 ecoregions. There are 29 parks that are truly outstanding from a natural resource perspective and 33 key watersheds that are representative of aquatic ecosystems in the 10 ecoregions and are capable of being fully protected from habitat conversion.
- **San Andreas Fault.** Over 93 miles (14.1%) of the 657 mile-long San Andreas Fault Zone within California passes through 18 units of the State Park System. The Salton Trough, a part of the San Andreas Fault Zone, is the largest continental rift on the North American Continent and includes Salton Sea State Recreation Area.
- **Oldest Lake.** Mono Lake (Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve) is thought to be the oldest Lake on the North American Continent. As it has no outlet, evaporation of freshwater has left the salts and minerals behind so that the lake is now about 2 1/2 times as salty, and 80 times as alkaline, as the ocean.
- **Geologic Features.** California State Parks has identified 57 outstanding geologic features or process within the State park System (see table next page).



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Geologic Gems of the California State Park System (in part)

Park Unit	Geomorphic Province	Features and Processes
Ahjumawi Lava Springs SP	Modoc Plateau	Volcanics, views of province
Anza Borrego Desert SP	Peninsular Ranges and Salton Trough	Fossils, differential erosion, groundwater links with structure, faults, and vegetation, oases, sand caves, type localities for geological formations, geological history record (continuous deposits across the Pliocene-Pleistocene boundary), concretions, paleozoic metasediments, intrusive granitics, volcanics, folds and minerals—gypsum, calcite, desert varnish, badlands
Castle Crags SP	Klamath Mountains	Granitics/plutonic domes/views of Shasta and the crags
Cuyamaca Rancho SP	Peninsular Ranges	Regional and contact metamorphism; granitics, metasediments, minerals (pegmatites)
Del Norte Coast Redwoods SP	Coast Ranges	Ultramafics/tectonics
Emerald Bay SP	Sierra Nevada	Granitics/glacial effects—moraines, erratics, striations
Gaviota SP	Transverse Ranges	Fossils, dip slope bedding/diatomite
Grover Hot Springs SP	Sierra Nevada	Thermal springs/granitics
Hollister Hills SVRA	Coast Ranges	San Andreas Fault, erosion, sedimentary sequence (stratigraphic column)
Humboldt Redwoods SP	Coast Ranges	Youthful geomorphology (inner gorge), landslides, jade

Last updated 12/07/2009.